



CHAYAT HASHAVUA: LION

THE LION IS MENTIONED MORE THAN 100 TIMES IN THE BIBLE. IT HAS A HALF-DOZEN HEBREW NAMES:

- Can anyone teach us the most common Hebrew name is for the lion?
- It's *aryeh* (אֲרִיָּה) or *ari* (אֲרִי), from a root which probably means “to be light,” because of their color.
- *Shachal*, which describes a fierce, middle-aged lion.
- *Shachatz*, which describes a lion that's old.
- *Lavir*, which describes a flame-colored lion.
- *Kefir*, which describes a young lion or whelp.

HOW MANY OF YOU HAVE BEEN TO ISRAEL AND SEEN A LION ROAMING FREE THERE?

- The reason is that there are not any lions in Israel anymore—they are extinct there.
- They were common in Israel from biblical times to the Middle Ages.
- Sometimes the enemies of Israel were compared to Lions (e.g., the Assyrians—Amos 3:4; and the Babylonians—Jeremiah 4:7).
- But the lion became the emblem of the tribe of Judah, called the Lion of Judah.
- The idea was that Judah would triumph over its enemies like a lion.
- Does anyone know where we see the Lion of Judah in most synagogues today?

IT'S TIME FOR THE LION QUIZ!

- How much do you think a lion weighs? (330-550 pounds)
- How long do you think a lion's body is, not counting the tail? (5.6 to 8.2 feet)
- How fast do you think a lion can run? (30 to 37 mph)
- How many pounds of meat do you think a lion can eat at one sitting? (80+ pounds)
- How far away do you think a lion's roar can be heard? (5.6 miles)

WHY DO YOU THINK THE LION IS CALLED “KING OF THE BEASTS”?

- This is a multiple-choice test: (a) Because lions attack people only when driven by hunger or sickness? (b) Because lions have a thick, shaggy

mane around their heads, like a crown? (c) Because lions control their urges and restrain themselves? (d) All of the above.

- One of our great books, the Talmud, teaches that we should “be as strong as a lion to do the will of God. . . .” (Avot 5:23)
- But this teaching may sound a little strange, because it seems to be saying that we should be ferocious and even cruel in doing what God wants of us.
- But the Talmud (Avot 4:1) also teaches that the lion is strong not just because of its physical strength but also because of its ability to control itself, to restrain its desires.
- Did you know that lions sometimes help weaker animals and even get food for them?
- So when we hear that we should be as “strong as lion to do the will of God,” it means that even when we are tempted not to tell the whole truth, or to take something without permission, or to be mean to someone because we don’t like something about them, we are to be like the lion and control those urges and do the right thing instead.

MANY PEOPLE HAVE NOTICED THAT OUR BIBLE NOT ONLY TELLS OF THE GOOD AND GREAT THINGS OUR PEOPLE HAVE DONE BUT ALSO THE WRONGDOING AND EVIL.

- What’s this got to do with lions?
- A great rabbi (Besht) once told a fable, a very old story, to explain why our Bible also tells about the bad things we Jews have done.
- A lion was teaching his cubs that they didn’t have to fear any living creature.
- One day, soon after, while walking in a ruin, the cubs came across a picture of Samson tearing a lion cub in two.
- They ran to their father and told him what they had seen and that they were frightened.
- Their father told them: The idea of a creature stronger than you is so far-fetched, it’s picture is not believable.
- It’s the exception that proves the rule.
- So the Bible’s stories of wrongdoing are so exceptional that they prove the good and great things our people have done over the centuries.



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